

# William Gardner

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Grant  
Gardner  
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## TRIP TO SEVIER THEN UP PROVO RIVER

William realized how short food and other supplies were and knew that something had to be done. He decided to go to Southern California.

1848 In February 1848, William and his son, John, started for California with two horses and a mule. At the Sevier river they met a mountaineer named Baker.

"It is impossible for you to get through," Baker said, "because the Indians are hostile, I think it would be much better plan if you went east."

"Which way do you suggest?" asked William.

"You can reach Fort Bridger by going up Provo canyon."

"That sounds good to me," William said, "and we'll be able to see new areas which can be used for communities."

William thanked Baker for his advice, said their goodbyes, and started back to the Provo river and followed it up through Provo Canyon, the real beginning of their trip to Missouri. He had to have food and supplies for his family, whether from California or Missouri. So they went East hoping to find work and still thinking it will leave more food for the family they left behind, (at least two less mouths to eat).

The weather had been mild but as they approached Fort Bridger a cold winter storm struck with a flurry, then extreme cold settled in. They remained in Fort Bridger until spring. While at Fort Bridger their two horses were stolen. Spring arrived and they continued their journey East, walking all the way, taking turns leading the mule. They had some terrible times as they crossed the plains.

As they made their way along the Platt River, William remembered that his brother, Robert, had buried a son who had been run over by an ox-team and watch for signs of the grave. William located the grave and found that wolves had dug into the grave and scattered the bones. William re-buried the bones before going on.

The weather during the winter had not improved the wagon trail. At one time they had to swim the Platt River while the ice was

floating thick in the water. Some streams, they waded through, the water was up to their necks. For several days at a time they could get nothing to eat but rose bush berries, then William killed a wolf, then some more wolves and they got along pretty well after that.

Although hardships and difficulties beset their way, they reached their destination at last and obtained employment in a packing plant, and stayed nearly two years. They boarded at the home of Mr. Parks, the father of Aunt Jane Gardner.

William bought some horses and a wagon, then loaded the wagon with provisions and returned to the Salt Lake Valley with another wagon train of immigrants. William found his family living in Millcreek with the rest of the Gardners.

(Now back to Janet and some of her problems while William was gone.)

In the spring of 1848 Janet planted a half acre of wheat for her food supply the next year. She guarded it and worked with it all summer because it meant more food for the family in the coming winter. But during the summer the crickets started to devour this little patch of wheat. When she saw it being stripped she said, "Will my little family have to starve through another winter?"

But the seagulls flew in and saved this little patch. As they did for so many other patches in the valley. Yes, more food was available the next winter.

During the first winter while William was away, Janet and the family lived with his parents and Robert's family. William's parents were not very strong and Janet did everything she could to help them. Robert took charge of things and helped the families survive.

In June of 1848, Janet gave birth to another son, Duncan.

William was gone about two years and during this time he had never written nor sent word to his family because mailing facilities were so poor they could not get word back and forth. When he returned Duncan was seventeen months old.

Although William had not written home, of course, when he returned he did give a verbal report of his activities and of the new country he had seen.

When William came back to Utah he had enough money to build a home in Cottonwood but he felt he did not have enough land for his boys. While they lived in Cottonwood their family increased by three more boys, Archie, Brigham, and Heber. Archie died in Cottonwood when he was a baby.

President Brigham Young heard of William's trip up the Provo River and in 1852 asked, "William, will you lead an exploration party consisting of your brothers Robert, and Archibald, and James Mangum, Joseph Adair, and James Craig on a trip up the Weber River to its source, thence over to the headwaters of the Provo River and follow it to its end at Utah Lake? The object of this trip is to explore the country, ascertain its resources in timber and grazing lands and take note of anything that can prove serviceable to incoming pioneers."

William accepted the challenge.

A detailed report was written about the river and canyon. One of the valleys on the Provo river that was described in detail, was later named Heber. The river could be used for floating logs and how a road could easily be constructed through the Provo canyon, except near the mouth of the canyon where the greatest construction problem would be encountered, the mountain came very close to the river.

Later wide-eyed children listened to their various trials and tales of that memorable jaunt. Dens of rattlesnakes and other reptiles had been encountered. The beaver at work was described. They had noted evidence of his skill all along the river course. And old Bruin, the brown bear, had peered through the pines at them. Yes, they had some very good stories and it was not only the children who listened.

## *Separate Story*

*to California*

As my wife and I were returning from Utah in August of 1992 we stopped at a rest stop where we saw this sign.

### FORTY MILE DESERT

The 40 mile desert beginning here, is a barren stretch of waterless Alkali Wasteland it was the most dreaded section of the California emigrant trail if possible it was traveled by night because of the great heat.

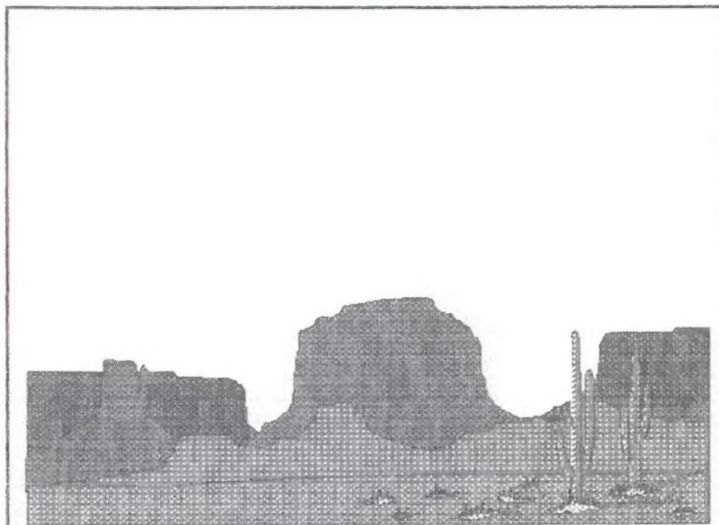
The route first traveled by Walker-Chiles party in 1843 with the first wagon train regardless of its Horrors it became the accepted route, as it split five miles southwest of here into the two main trails to California -- The Carson River and Truckee River routes.

Starvation for men and animals stalked every mile. A survey made in 1850 showed these appalling statistics --- 1061 dead mules, almost 5,000 Horses, 3750 Cattle and 953 graves. The then value of personal property loss was set at \$1,000,000.

The heaviest traffic came from 1849 to 1869 it was still used after completion of the Central Pacific Railroad in 1869.

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I believe William and families traveled this route in 1861 to California because he bought some property in the County of San Joaquin on 24 Nov 1863 and sold some property also in the County of San Joaquin on 3 Oct 1866 and returned to Utah before 1868. This makes me believe that he traveled this route in both directions. I am enclosing this to let us know what some of the conditions they had to



This is not exactly how this desert looked but it is a desert.

1863

1866

travel through. Even today the water's hauled into the rest stop and the travelers are asked to be conservative. Today it's hard for us (in our imagination) to know and feel how they traveled. They were lucky to make thirty miles in a day and we made that in a half hour.